

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PARIS 08033 071515Z
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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R 071426Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8228
INFO AMCONSUL LYON
AMCONSUL MARSEILLE
AMCONSUL NICE
AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

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FOLLOWING MESSAGE SENT PARIS DATED 3 MARCH 1978 FROM
BORDEAUX RPTD FOR YOUR ACTION/INFO:

QUOTE:
BORDEAUX 0046

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, FR
SUBJECT: FRENCH LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS: A REGIONAL
PREFET'S PREDICTION

1. SUMMARY: DURING A LONG, PRIVATE CONVERSATION ON
FEBRUARY 28, PAUL MASSON, PREFET OF THE GIRONDE AND
REGIONAL PREFET FOR AQUITAINE, TOLD ME THAT, THOUGH THE
LEFT WOULD DO FAR BETTER THAN THE PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY
ON THE FIRST ROUND, MARCH 12, HE IS CERTAIN THAT THE
PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY WILL WIN IN THE SECOND ROUND,
MARCH 19. END SUMMARY.

2. MR. MASSON'S THEORY IS THAT A MAJORITY OF THE
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PAGE 02 PARIS 08033 071515Z

FRENCH WILL BE VOTING AGAINST SOMETHING RATHER THAN FOR
SOMETHING IN THIS YEAR'S ELECTIONS. THE VOTERS ARE
DISSATISFIED AND WILL SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPRESS
THAT DISSATISFACTION IN THE FIRST ROUND BY VOTING
HEAVILY FOR CANDIDATES OF THE LEFT. THEN THEY WILL
STEP BACK AND SAY, "MON DIEU, WHAT HAVE WE DONE?"
AT THIS POINT, FEAR OF RADICAL CHANGE AND OF THE

COMMUNISTS WILL TAKE OVER. THE RESULT WILL BE A SWING BY MANY TOWARD THE RIGHT; SOME BECAUSE OF A MORE REASONED APPROACH AND SOME BECAUSE OF GUT FEELINGS OF CONSERVATISM, LIBERALISM OR FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN. ADDED TO THIS WILL BE THE REFUSAL OF MANY SOCIALISTS TO VOTE FOR A COMMUNIST WHO HAS BECOME THE SOLE CANDIDATE OF THE LEFT IN THEIR DISTRICT. IN CONSEQUENCE OF THESE FACTORS, ACCORDING TO MR. MASSON, THE PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY WILL COME OUT AHEAD IN THE FINAL ROUND. HE POINTED TO THE 1967 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS AS ILLUSTRATIVE OF HOW THE FRANCH WILL REACT THIS TIME. IN THE FIRST ROUND IN 1967, DE GAULLE'S MAJORITY RECEIVED A TREMENDOUSLY HEAVY VOTE. MANY VOTERS FELT THIS HAD GONE TOO FAR AND COULD RESULT IN DE GAULLE'S HAVING VERY LITTLE REIN ON WHAT HE MIGHT DO. CONSEQUENTLY, IN THE SECOND ROUND, THEY SWUNG SO HEAVILY IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION THAT DE GAULLE'S SIDE WAS LEFT WITH A MAJORITY OF ONLY ONE SEAT IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.

3. MR. MASSON AGREES WITH NEARLY ALL WITH WHOM I HAVE SPOKEN THAT, WHATEVER HAPPENS, FRANCE IS IN FOR A VERY DIFFICULT PERIOD AFTER THE ELECTIONS.

4. EVALUATING MR. MASSON'S OPINION, IT MUST BE REMEMBERED THAT HE HAS FULL ACCESS TO THE SECRET OPINION POLLS OF THE FRENCH INTELLIGENCE AGENCY, "RESEIGNELIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 PARIS 08033 071515Z

MENTS GENERAUX." HIS PREDICTION OF THE VERY HEAVY VOTE FOR THE LEFT IN THE FIRST ROUND IS UNDOUBTEDLY BASED UPON THESE AS WELL AS THE PUBLISHED POLLS. BUT SUCH OPINION SAMPLINGS CAN REALLY ONLY APPLY TO THE FIRST ROUND AND HAVE LEFT HIM FREE TO CONSTRUCT A THEORY OF HOW THE SITUATION WILL BE RECOUPED FOR THE PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY; WHICH HE HAS DONE. MR. MASSON IS AN EXTREMELY INTELLIGENT, ABLE AND PRACTICAL MAN WHO SERVED AS CHIEF OF STAFF TO MICHEL DEBRE WHEN HE WAS MINISTER OF DEFENSE.
MARVIN UNQUOTE
HARTMAN

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